



Tips for Parents

Parent involvement that makes a difference



In August 2011, People for Education released a report, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*, which reviewed thirty years of research from Canada, the United States and England.

The four key things that parents can do to help ensure their children's success are outlined here:

1. Have high expectations for your children.

Let your children know that you think it is important that they do well in school. High parental expectations have the greatest impact on student achievement. When parents consistently express belief in their children's potential and tell their kids that they expect them to succeed academically, students do better.

2. Talk about school.

Talk with your children about what's happening at school – activities, programs and what they are learning. Surprisingly, this has a greater impact on academic achievement than monitoring homework, being at home after school for your kids, or limiting the time they are allowed to watch TV or go out during the week.

According to our kids, we may not be doing such a great job in this area. In student surveys conducted by the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO), less than half of students in grade 3 (46%) report they talk to a parent or guardian "every day or almost every day" about their school activities. By grade 6, that percentage drops to 38%.

3. Help your children develop a positive attitude toward learning and good work habits.

The research shows that the greatest influence you can have on your kids' chances for success in school lie in how you influence their attitudes, their sense of personal competence, and their work habits, including persistence, seeking help, and planning.

So rather than trying to directly "teach" your children, focus on helping them handle distractions and crises of confidence, praise them for effort and persistence and demonstrate a positive attitude about school as a whole. Bit by bit, these are the attributes that will build solid foundations for ongoing success.

"The evidence is clear. Parents make a difference. And the way they contribute most to their children's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your child succeed at school."

4. Read together (in any language)

Reading is one of the foundations of all education, and you can make a big difference by reading and talking about books and stories with your children. Reading with children is the best way to turn them on to reading. But this doesn't mean that you should be forcing them to sound out words. Instead of focussing on teaching your children the mechanics of reading, teach them to **love** reading. Make reading fun and enjoyable!

Once again, our kids are telling us that there is room for improvement when it comes to time spent reading together. The EQAO student survey found that only 21% of children in grade 3 report reading together with a parent or guardian "every day or almost every day".

The evidence is clear.

Parents make a difference. And the way they contribute most to their children's education is through what they do at home. Being a parent can be challenging, but the good news is that you don't have to be 'volunteer of the year' or an expert on the war of 1812 to help your child succeed at school.

Parent involvement in school activities

Whether it is attending a school concert, cheering on a school team, or participating in community events and meetings planned by your school council, parent involvement in school activities can foster a sense of community within the school. It can build stronger relationships between teachers and parents, and provide an opportunity for parents to connect with and support each other.

School-based activities may not have a direct impact on student achievement, but they can be a fun and engaging way to build a stronger school community. When you can, take advantage of the opportunity to participate in school events to show your support for your children's school.

For more information:

www.peopleforeducation.ca

Read People for Education's report on parent involvement, *Doing what matters most: How parents can help their children succeed in school*. It provides a background on all the research behind this tip sheet. You can also join our online community to connect with other parents, and go online and get your questions about education in Ontario answered.

www.eqao.com

To find out more about the questionnaires that students, teachers, and principals complete every year as part of the EQAO testing, or see the survey results, visit the Education Quality and Accountability Office website.

tvoparents.tv.org

TVOParents has a wide range of useful resources for parents, including videos in many languages, interviews with experts and up to date research.



Helping Your Child at Home

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Homework

- Homework is a common part of student's lives
- Benefits
 - Improve understanding of schoolwork
 - Help develop good study habits and time management
- Drawbacks – if too time consuming and difficult
 - Prevents participation in leisure/social activities
 - Lead to negative feelings towards schoolwork

How much time?

- How much time a student spends on homework depends on the age and difficulty of the task.
- Suggested guidelines:
 - K-2 = 10-20 minutes
 - Grade 3-6 = 30-60 minutes

General Homework Tips for Parents

- Make sure your child has a quiet, well-lit place to do homework, with the materials they require
- Be positive about homework & Express how important school is
- When your child does homework, you do homework
- Help your child with time management (set time each day, help identify which tasks to start with)
 - If your child doesn't have any homework, use this time to review material, read a book, preview next topic

Time Management

1. Make a list of activities they have/want to do
2. Help them organize the activities into a schedule with time. If they have too many activities, work together to prioritize activities and to move activities to another evening.

Time Management

- Use a clock to help your child understand concept of time.
 - Kitchen timer
 - Time Timer



One Strategy

1. Make a list of activities that your child wants to do
2. Determine how long each activity takes

- Snack (20 mins)
- Math homework (20 mins)
- Journal Entry (20 mins)
- Video games (20 mins)
- Watch a show at 4:00

Visually show how long each activity will take

- Snack (20 mins)
- Math homework (20 mins)
- Journal Entry (20 mins)
- Video games (20 mins)
- Watch a show at 4:00



How much help to provide?

- Avoid doing their homework for your child
- This will depend on the student's age, difficulty with subject area and study habits
- Ensure your child understands the task
 - Do a few questions together → watch your child do a few → check their work
 - Praise correct answers and show how to correct mistakes
- Know your child's strengths and areas that require extra support. Provide more support for areas that they find difficult

Connecting with Teachers

- A student can struggle with homework for many reasons
- Let the teacher know you would like to touch base regarding how to support your child at home
- Find out the best way to communicate with your student's teacher (email, in person, phone call)
- Ask:
 - What areas to focus on
 - Best approach/strategies for supporting your child

Beyond the homework

- Parents can extend learning by:
 - Playing games that involve the skills the student is learning in class
 - Making household activities learning activities
 - Take their child to the library, movies, museums etc. to do further exploration of the school topics
 - Have discussions around school topics
 - Read or have your child read aloud to you every night and create a dialogue around the book
 - Examples: ask questions, ask them to predict what will happen next, re-read difficult sentences

Parent Involvement

- The research show parents can make a difference through what they do at home.
- Review the People for Education report for more information on:
 - Have high expectations
 - Talk about School
 - Help develop positive attitude towards learning and good work habits
 - Read together